AGENT ORANGE UPDATE.....pages 6~7

THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

25¢

Vol.12 No.3 Summer 1982

War or Peace, Life or Death?

VETS TAKE THE LEAD !

As this issue of THE VETERAN goes to be printed, the Israeli Army is poised to swoop down on Beirut; Iranian troops are on the into Iraq which is, in turn, hustling to come up with allies and weapons. Ethiopia, Chad, Somalia are all in various stages of fighting; at the least, El Salvador and Guatemala in Central America are rumbling with revolution and threatening to give the Reagan Administration a chance to plough in. Although the Falkland's war seems to be over, Britain and Argentina have yet to find a solution to the conflict. And, over all of these conflicts lies the constant rhetoric of the two superpowers rattling the sabres of nuclear war.

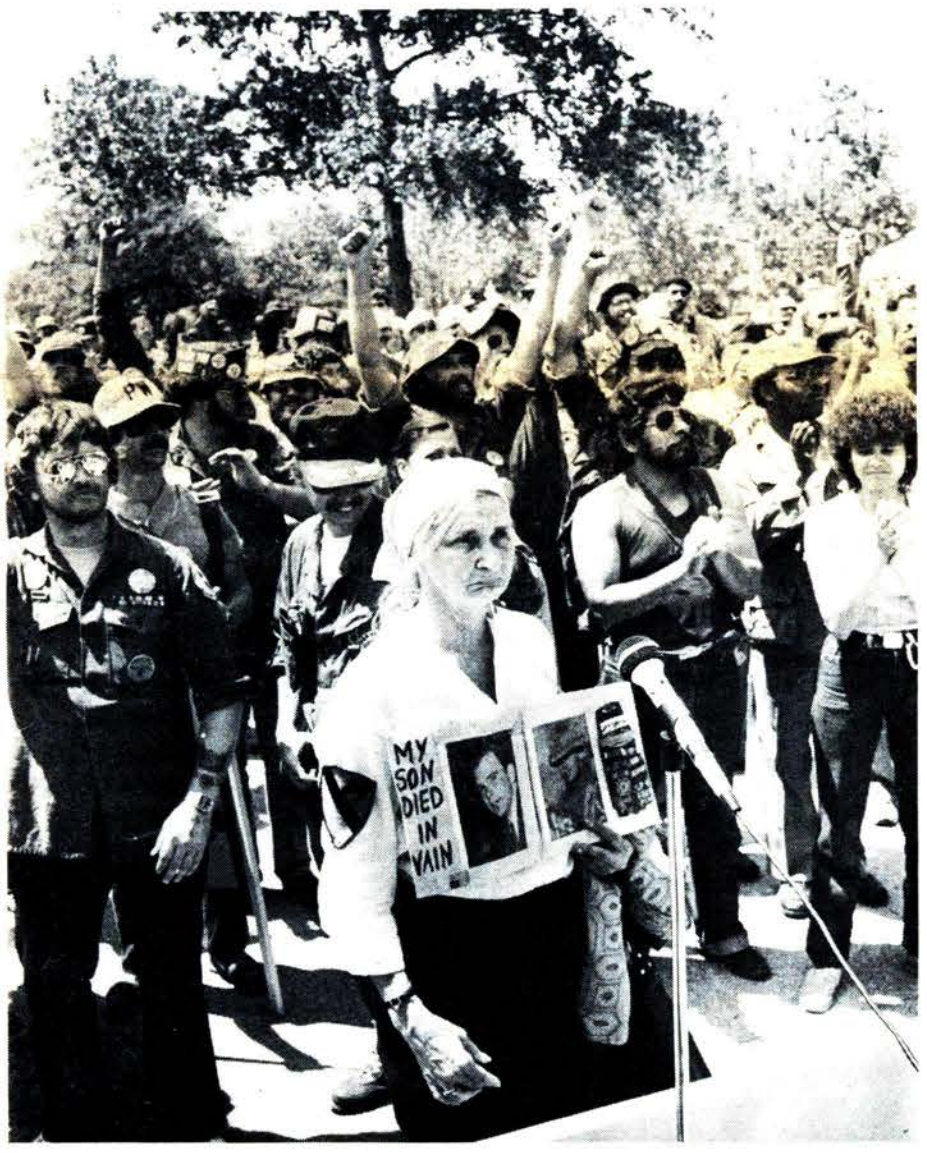
With all of this, there are some hopeful signs: the million people who marched in New York City for a nuclear freeze, and the similar movements in other countries around the world. There are peace demonstrations in Israel with the Wall Street Journal reporting that many civilians were holding back from criticizing their government until "reserve officers returned from Lebanon and spoke out again the war, the first time in Israel that soldiers had protested a war they had just come from waging." (VVAW sends its greeting to the Israeli Veterans Against the Lebanese War!)

These fledgling motions and movements toward a peaceful solution to some of the world's problems have miles to go before they start to have a powerful effect on the world's leaders. In the U.S. in particular, with Reagan seeming to be glad to take the lead in irresponsible bombwaving, there is work to be done. Flying in the face of his own campaign promises, Reagan has now begun prosecution of the young men who refused to register for the draft. No doubt this is meant as warning for those who might want to object to the next U.S. military venture as well as a signal to all of Reagan's buddies that "patriotism" once again means waving the flag and beating the drums for war, for "defense spending," and for stomping the nasty commies into the ground.

Many vets have already learned that in wars it those who are sent off to fight them who are the real losers--and the people around whom the war rages whether Lebanese being slaughtered by Israeli bombs and artillery or the Vietnamese whose families are still suffering the effects of being sprayed with Agent Orange.

Whether it is in the anti-draft movement, in the anti-nuke movement or in the fight to show the American people the results of Vietnam (such as demanding testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims), get involved. Perhaps the time will arrive when the people will have their way, and those who glory in and profit from the spilling of our blood will hear a resounding "NO!"

Vietnam Veterans March on Washington D.C.
OPERATION DEWEY CANYON IV



Vietnam Vets and Families Take a Stand For the Future; Demanding NO MORE VIETNAMS & DECENT BENEFITS...p8

Support:
SEND LETTERS NOW!

Agent Orange Victims of New Jersey are doing all they can to get passed Bill S-1313 recently introduced into the Senate Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs in New Jersey. The Bill will set up new vets outreach centers in the state and is badly needed. Letters in support of S-1313 may be sent to:

Senator Jack Gallaher
590 Highway 35
Middletown, NJ 07748

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

National Office
P.O. Box 25592
Chicago, IL 60625

Nonprofit Org
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No 1425

Jearl Wood Free.....page 3
Central America.....page 4
Australian Nam Vet.page 5
Hagel Resignation...page 10
Vet Center Bust .....page 13
Nuclear Realities ....page 14

Where We Came From,
Who Are We, Who Can Join

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

A National Veterans Organization Recognized as Tax Deductible.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began in 1967 to join the ranks of those who wanted an end to U.S. involvement in Indochina. Basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we have fought against unjust wars, whether the U.S. invasion of Indochina or, potentially, El Salvador, or the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. We have supported, by whatever means were possible, those who are fighting for their own liberation. And we have stood with veterans of all eras in fighting for the things we need, have been promised, and have been earned.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets what we need only when forced to do so--that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can accomplish, but when veterans unite to fight together, we can do much. VVAW has seen some real successes: we helped to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, we helped get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, we helped to win (to a great extent) amnesty for war resisters. With other vets groups we helped to stir up enough public furor that the Veterans Administration took its first halting steps to look for an answer to Agent Orange poisoning, and recognized what VVAW used to call Post Vietnam Syndrome when we were leading rap groups in 1970 (and is now called "post-traumatic stress or delayed stress syndrome") as a service-connected disability.

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets. Sometimes this has brought us into conflict with the "traditional" vets organizations. While they have tended to stand behind the U.S. government and its various war-like manueverings, VVAW has always asked "Why?" We've opposed moves toward war, fight against registration and the draft which will follow, opposed inflated defense expenditures, welcomed vets with "bad" discharges into the organization and fought to get the discharge system dropped entirely from the military.

We know what it means to have been used once by the government and its corporate backers, and then be thrown away with a bad GI Bill, wretched healthcare, Agent Orange ravaging our bodies, vivid memories of the war often ravaging our minds, no jobs, and all the multitude of other problems Vietnam vets often face. We do not intend to see our children go through the same thing in the next war for somebody else's profit!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War
P.O. Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625

NATIONAL COORDINATORS

Bill Davis
(312)463-2127

Barry Romo
(312) 989-4684

Peter Zastrow
(312) 275-0043

John Lindquist
(414) 963-0398

THE VETERAN
Vietnam Veterans Against the War 25¢

SUBSCRIBE

12 Issues $6
Institutions $15

Make checks payable to
VVAW

VVAW and THE VETERAN are copyright; the insignia is a trademark of VVAW, Inc All Rights Reserved.

JOIN THE VETS GROUP FIGHTING FOR ALL 'NAM VETS

Membership Form

P.O. Box 25592 Chicago, IL 60625

DATE _____

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DATES OF SERVICE _____ BRANCH _____ UNIT _____

OVERSEAS DUTY _____ DATES _____

MILITARY OCCUPATION _____ RANK _____

VVAW welcomes all people who want to join together to build a fighting veterans' organization. Although the majority of our members are vets of the Vietnam-era, we want all veterans of all ages--as well as interested non-vets--to join to build the vets' struggle. Membership requirements are participation in the life of the organization, and payment of $1 per month to the national organization with a $5 initiation fee.

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local projects and programs under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

_____
Signature

Make checks payable to Vietnam Veterans Against the War

12 NON-FICTION STORIES BY VIETNAM VETERANS ABOUT LIFE AS A G.I. IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

PREVIEW OF A FUTURE BOOK OF STORIES BY VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

50¢ postpaid.

IF YOU HAVE A "WAR' STORY YOU WANT TO TELL, SEND IT TO VVAW

BUTTONS

three-color VVAW insignia

PATCHES

insignia in three colors:
Patches: $4.00

Any of the above can be ordered from the VVAW National Office, P.O.Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625; make checks payable to VVAW.

JEARL WOOD NOT GUILTY!
DELAYED STRESS CASE

On August 22, 1980, Jearl Wood, a Black Vietnam vet feeling the pressures of job harrassment and a genuine case of post-traumatic stress disorder, turned on his general foreman at the Ford Torrence plant south of Chicago and shot him. Nearly two years later, a twelve-person jury in a Cook County Court found Jearl Wood not guilty by reason of insanity.

The trial itself lasted from April 22nd until May 6th, 1982, not long compared to the two years of struggle, preparation and tension leading up to it. There were two years of attacks on Jearl Wood in the press, most notably the Chicago Tribune, physical attacks on homes of defense committee members, arson on a lounge where a Jearl Wood fundraiser was about to be held, and the on-going family and economic pressures on Jearl himself.

The defense of Jearl Wood got off to a less-than-favorable start when his first attorney took a large portion of Jearl's time and almost all his money--and then dropped the case. Enter Peter Erlinder and his partner David Thomas as new defense counsel, who wisely restructured Jearl Wood's case on the foundation of post-traumatic stress disorder. A defense committee made up of Jearl's fellow workers from the Ford plant, a spectrum of political groups, clergymen, union officials and VVAW closely coordinated with the attorneys and began a campaign to reverse public opinion and show support for Jearl's case. Fundraisers were held to begin paying for the incredible expenses for Jearl's defense.

The final delay before the trial came as the State asked for more time for preparation, finally realizing they had a battle on their hands. The result of the delay brought additional charges against Wood.

After two days of jury selection, the trial began with the defense bringing a long line of witnesses to establish Jearl's case. Noted authorities on post-traumatic stress disorder, Psychologists John Wilson of Ohio, and Charles Figley of Purdue, both experts in their field, gave clear-cut explanations of ptsd, its origins and its application to Jearl's case which tied in well with doctors who had most recently been treating Jearl Wood. Other defense witnesses included friends, family members, fellow employees, and significant testimony from Vietnam vets who had served with Jearl in his unit or similar units during the same period in Vietnam.

Tribune photo by Walter Neal

Jearl Wood [center], a veteran of the Vietnam war, leaves a Markham court Tuesday with his son, Jearl Jr., and his wife, Zuella, after being acquitted on a charge of attempted murder.

The prosecution responded with attempts to smear the reputation of Jearl's friends and family members, and attempts to show Jearl Wood as a hideous criminal (his record of no previous arrests or convictions on any count notwithstanding). In what was probably their biggest blunder, the state completely blew their case by attacking post-traumatic stress disorder as some "egghead theory dreamed up by college professors" instead of the real problem that it is among 'Nam vets--even to the point where the Veterans Administration and the American Psychiatric Association recognize ptsd as a real disease. Vietnam vets in the audience and on the jury were amazed at the apparent lack of comprehension by the prosecutors as they referred to this "Vietnamese syndrome" and these "Vietnamese veterans" showing complete insensitivity to the real issue of the trial. In the end, it was their undoing.

In what was perhaps the most disgusting moment of the State's presentation, prosecutors called Dr Gil Bogen, noted "veterans' advocate" and founder of "Vet-Line/Hot Line" and Veterans for Reagan. Bogen pronounced Jearl Wood free from any problems with ptsd, based on 30 minutes of conversation with Wood and a review of the police record in the case; this record was later shown to be completely inaccurate and erroneous. Bogen, the self-styled vets' savior, got his little boat blown out of the water by real experts in the field and an intelligent jury who saw the significance of ptsd. The sneering and general ugliness showed by the prosecutors, their attacks bordering on racism, their continual reminders that "Vietnam is not on trial here," while Vietnam vet after Vietnam vet took the stand, ultimately ended their case.

On May 5, 1982, after two earlier splits, the jury returned and gave their verdict: "Not guilty by reason of insanity." There were tears in the eyes of Jearl Wood, his family, his supporters and the defense attorneys. The head prosecutor stomped out of the courtroom, snarling with rage, a performance which led one observer to comment, "that guy--a real scumbag to the end."

The trial can clearly be seen as a precedent-setting verdict for many Vietnam vets across the country and an important step toward solving some of the problems of ptsd. The fight that Jearl Wood must carry on remains. While he will not be incarcerated, Jearl, like many of us, must find some resolution to his problems. Similarly, the financial problems he now faces with defense costs must also be overcome.

VVAW is proud to have participated in Jearl's defense and would not hesitate to do it again in a similar case. We remain committed to helping Jearl and his family. We ask that others do the same by sending what contributions they can to the Jearl Wood Defense Committee, 15803 Paulina St, Harvey IL 60426.

JULY CAMPOUT and MEETING

During the 6th annual VVAW campout in Wisconsin, members from a number of chapters voted to keep the present national coordinators and discussed what went on during Operation Dewey Canyon IV. The meeting was only one small part of a great party weekend--put it on your calendar for next year!

25th STEERING COMM. NATIONAL VVAW MEETING SET

VVAW will be holding a National Steering Committee Meeting in Chicago on the second weekend of September. VVAW holds these meetings in order to get as much input as possible from members and chapters, to determine policy and set actions for the year to come, making use of the democratic process and incorporating whatever input is provided.

This will be the second National VVAW meeting this year: the first was held during the July 4th campout in Wisconsin. We plan to take up the question of a national program, exchange experiences, and summarize the state of Vietnam vets under the Reagan Administration.

All VVAW members are encouraged to come to the meeting; non-VVAW members who are involved in the struggle of vets are also invited and welcomed as observers; while you are not able to vote in the meeting, we would certainly welcome your input. For more information contact the VVAW National Office at P.O.Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625, or call Barry Romo at (312) 989-4684.

Registration; Draft; War
PROSECUTIONS SET

The Reagan Administration once again finds itself in a real bind over the question of registration and the draft. During his presidential campaign Ronnie was way out in front concerning these questions: "It is morally objectionable," he said of the draft, "and should be used only in the most severe national emergency. Any other time a draft, or draft registration destroys the very values that our society is committed to defending." But nowadays, Ronnie is reclining at his Camp David hideaway sipping Geritol when it comes to the issue of registration and the draft. And he's setting loose his dogs on those who agreed with his position on registration and refused to sign up.

In 1980 a registration law was enacted calling for all 19 and 20 year olds to register in July of 1981, and thereafter, all 18-year-olds to register for the draft. At the time, and ever since, government spokesmen have been horrified that anyone could think this move meant a return to the draft--heaven forbid! It's simply a way to accelerate the draft should, horrors (!), it ever become necessary again. It's also one efficient way of identifying potential "troublemakers" and it's been rather effective: almost a million potential registrants refused to register.

And this is where the bind came in. The last thing that the Reagan Administration wants is a rebirth of the anti-draft movement which was a large part of the anti-war movement of the '60's and early '70's. At the same time, being strong advocates of "law and order" (their law and their order), the government could hardly allow these "lawbreakers" to get away with it, even if they were only agreeing with what Reagan had said during his campaign.

After only a year in office, in January of 1982, Reagan finally decided that he supported registration. In generous repentance for having lied during his campaign, Reagan allowed a month of "grace" for those who had not registered. The response was not spectacular since those young men who refused to register in the first place were not about to change their minds. Various threats of prosecution of those who refused to register also did little good. A lengthy court battle permitted the government access to social security files so they could uncover those who had not registered. An attempt by the government to go after non-registrants who could be put on trial in remote areas was uncovered; government plans in this area are still unclear, though it is clear that Reagan & Co would much have preferred to carry out this plan in silence (until they could announce the results).

Since the Reagan Administration seems to be having a difficult time deciding what to do with this political bombshell, it's hard to tell what will happen next. It appears that the first anti-registration indictments will come down shortly; it's certain that demonstrations against registration and the draft will take place whenever and wherever such prosecutions actually take place.

Given the difficulty in finding any kind of job these days, the military will always be able to get some people who have nowhere else to go. But even with the "economic draft" and with the many inducements and high-priced ads that the all-volunteer military is putting out, the Pentagon still sees the need for registration. People do not cock a gun unless they intend to fire it; registration simply for the sake of registration is a joke--but few are laughing because the draft is lurking around the corner as soon as Reagan & Co decide which war they will get us involved in. Based on our experience, VVAW plans to support, however possible, those who refused to register for the draft.

Material provided by Mike Parisi of Chicago VVAW and Vets for Peace

Guardianphoto by David Vita

Demonstrations such as this one of 50,000 in Washington, D.C., March 27 are putting increasing pressure on Congress to stop U.S. intervention in El Salvador.

Hunger and Revolution
CENTRAL AMERICA

Hunger and its variations--malnutrition, pellagra, starvation--don't receive much attention in the news media. They probably aren't considered much of a factor either by the Pentagon and State Department in their analysis of the current crisis in Central America. And yet, the issue of hunger is at the very core of the crisis. Under ordinary circumstances, men and women don't leave their homes to go to the mountains to fight. But these are no ordinary times in Salvador and in Guatemala. It is hunger that finally has pushed increasing numbers of people into the ranks of the popular forces. And it is hunger that will finally break the iron grip that juntas have on both countries.

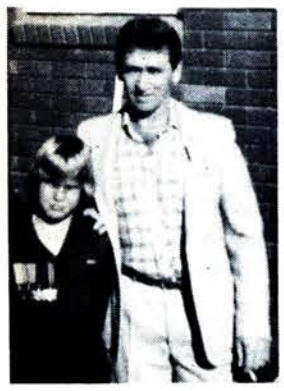
To understand the paradox of people starving in agricultural countries requires examining two concepts: land tenure and the export-oriented economy. From these concepts stem the major causes of hunger and therefore of revolution. In both El Salvador and Guatemala about 5% of the population controls 70% of the land. This translates into great tracts of productive land for the few fortunate farmers and no land at all for great numbers of agricultural day laborers (formerly farmers). The tragedy is that to deprive a farmer of his land is to take away not only his livelihood but also the relation he formerly had with his community. Without some land on which to grow subsistence crops, a family is essentially condemned to starvation. When the government aggravates this critical situation by razing villages and burning crops, the displacement of rural populations reaches disastrous proportions. And the guerilla ranks swell.

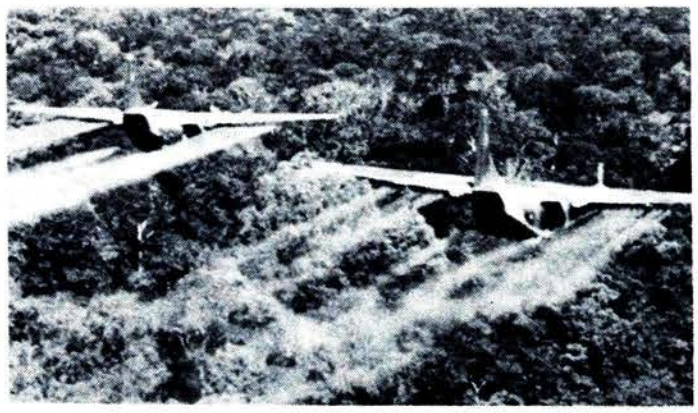
If the present land tenure in El Salvador and Guatemala provides for unequal distribution of land, export-oriented economies similarly distort the distributions of the fruits of national production. While the rich bask in a life replete with European and U.S. vacations, condominiums, and "best" schools, and other trappings so characteristic of our own idle rich, the vast majority of people scratch out, as best they can, what is called "subsistence living." They tend the coffee plants and harvest the red berries each summer, they cut, wrap and load millions of boxes of United Brands and Dole's best bananas, they weed, spray and pick the cotton boll, and they watch over and care for great herds of cattle. The products of all these ventures are all exported. And, in one sense, the revenues are also exported. Profits which don't directly go to foreign investors, go to members of the upper classes who effectively keep their money from benefiting the workers. This double concentration of land and money in the hands of just scores of families results first in frustration, then desparation for the millions of poor who sink deeper and deeper into misery and hopelessness.

It was clear during Dewey Canyon IV that our (?) representatives (?) in Congress lack the guts to resist the Reagan Administration line that Central America is next on the Commies hit list. We need to educate ourselves and our representatives. We need to know the root cause of the struggle in Central America. Then we can recognize the Administration's bullshit for what it is and demand what really will help El Salvador and Guatemala--no U.S. aid, no U.S. intervention!

Jack Elder
San Antonio
VVAW

INTERVIEW WITH AUSTRALIAN NAM VET





Bob Gibson and his nephew in Australia.

Bob Gibson, an Australian Vietnam veteran from Harbord in New South Wales, served in Vietnam in 1967-68. He is one of the founders of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia and has been for some years a spokesman for the rights of Australian Vietnam vets. He has also, almost singlehandedly, kept the U.S. vets informed about the progress of the struggle in Australia, among other things allowing VVAW to use the material he sends for our regular "Up From Down Under" column in THE VETERAN.

Recently Gibson has spent a couple of months in the U.S., including a week in Chicago with members of VVAW. During that visit THE VETERAN did the following interview.

Bob Gibson: "You have to come talk and see in order to tell what's going on. I could have stayed in Australia and corresponded and really not got a feeling of what's happening in this country. We're a long way ahead, possibly because of the smaller number of troops (there were 44,000 Australian troops in Vietnam during the Vietnam War). But, we've just had a better policy within the system where we thought we were really badly off."

THE VET: "You seem to have a different relationship with your VA than we do here in the U.S. Here we always seem to be wrong until we can prove ourselves right."

Bob: "That's the opposite in our country. The veteran has the benefit of the doubt. The government has to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that there's nothing wrong with the veteran. And that's the way it really should be."

During the week there was a lot of discussion of the differences between the American VA and the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs. Because the Australian government has to prove that a particular problem faced by an Australian Vietnam vet is not the result of Agent Orange, some 6000 Australian vets are already receiving some sort of disability payment for Agent Orange-related problems. Since vets can sue the VA in the courts (unlike the U.S. VA which cannot be sued in state or federal court), the Australian VA is now under orders to contact all 44,000 Vietnam vets to inform them of the possibility of Agent Orange problems. There are a number of smaller differences, almost invariably in favor of Australian vets--Bob, for instance, goes to his own private doctor paid for by the Australian VA. But underlying all the differences is the simple fact that the Australian government deals with its vets as if they deserve their rights rather than the U.S. system which seems to assume that all vets, and especially Vietnam vets, are pure scum who are trying to steal something from the VA

THE VET: Did the Australian government, like the U.S. government, do all it could to try to justify your participation in Vietnam?

Bob: After 1968 the Australain people didn't really take seriously what the government was saying; over half the people in Australia didn't even know why we were involved. As soldiers we were told that it was against communism, that sooner or later the Yellow Hoards would come into our country. It was coming home that changed things for many of us.

THE VET: The patriotic spirit that inspired you--is it still there?

Bob: I think it is with some of the young kids. But Vietnam will make them think before the situation comes up again. If we're not all going to be involved, a lot of them won't go. You can't take a guy off the corner of the street and the rest of the street and the rest of the street doesn't go. We would have got enough volunteers to go to Vietnam without the draft (Bob was drafted, by the lottery system; it wasn't until two years later that another man from his small home town was drafted for Vietnam duty)--I'm convinced of that--but when there's another war, and there will be, unless everyone goes a lot of people are going to have second thoughts.

THE VET: We were faced by a government which was more than happy to use us once and then throw us aside once they had gotten their use out of us; what was the attitude of the Australian government when you got back from Vietnam?

Bob: We faced the same sort of thing. By 1972 when the war was winding down for us, there was a lot the government wanted to forget about Vietnam. In the process, because they wanted to forget about Vietnam and get on with running the country as usual, the Vietnam vet was lost and the politicians wanted to forget us. Vietnam vets were asked--not in so many words--to remain invisible.

But now there are vets at home who aren't ashamed to say they're Vietnam vets and that's great: they're starting to get some self-esteem back. There are still many vets who will never forget and forgive, particularly their homecoming. If people wanted to fight against the war they should have directed their efforts against the government, not against the vets. But now more and more vets are coming to our ANZAC Day when the old regiments march together. They're buying a lot of books about Vietnam, while until 1979, you wouldn't see anything to do with Vietnam.

THE VET: What about post-traumatic stress?

Bob: It certainly exists, but the government hasn't taken it seriously up until about the last year. The divorce rate among Vietnam vets is tremendously high. Most of my Vietnam friends have divorced, some have remarried again; it seems to be like you need someone to depend on. But overall veterans are respected; we were expected to fit back into society and whatever problems there were they were supposed to be kept inside. But we were so badly treated by the VA, and they reckon the problems at home won't peak until 1985. If that's the case, there are going to be a lot of problems, especially nervous and psychological problems. There are problems with kids: one of my best friends, his boy has a rash all over his body. He's been seen by 30 dermatologists. Yet that same rash is on five Vietnam vets I know, the same rash, identical.

When the stuff began around the chemical issue in Vietnam the government was very smug about how they weren't involved in any of that in Vietnam; I knew different because I had the photographs and everything. They were saying it was the American government--that the American Army had done all of this, we didn't use 2,4,5-T or 2,4-D. Then we dug a little further and got all the information on experiments with Australian soldiers at our basecamp.

THE VET: Even though we come from different cultures with differing views of the military, and though we may have served in entirely different areas in Vietnam, there is still a common bond--why is that?

Bob: When I came back one of the things I wanted to do was go and visit one of my mate's parents (he was killed during the war) but just couldn't bring myself to do it. When I talked with a rap group last week, there were five guys in the room who had wanted to do the same thing. They hadn't done it--I finally did it just last year--but they wanted to and just didn't know how to go about it. Another guy who had been going to rap sessions for a couple of years hadn't opened up at all and it was only because I was there (and he said that), he opened up and talked for about 25 minutes and it was because I was a veteran from 25,000 kilometers away that he wanted to tell what he thought. That was amazing.

GOING SECRET WITH THE TRUTH

AGENT ORANGE HEARINGS

The window is slamming shut! The VA's Advisory Committee on the Health-Related Effects of Herbicides (ACHREH) had a closed session following its public meeting on May 13, 1982. This Committee had been a rare opening whereby the public and exposed vets could follow the various studies underway or beginning with regard to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam. Now we are notified by the VA that the 13th quarterly meeting, to be held at the VA Central Office on the morning of August 31, 1982, may also include a closed afternoon session.

When will we have had enough of this nonsense? First, years of inaction and denial of the Agent Orange problem was followed by a flurry of committee-creation (of more value to underworked bureaucrats than sick veterans). Then, a grand epidemiological study was proposed and the protocol design for the study awarded by the VA to a UCLA school of medicine team under the leadership of Dr Gary "Alleviate vets fears" Spivey. Spivey produced an unacceptable design which was then reworked and sent back to the ACHREH with the recommendation that certain sections be *classified* (the questionaire and the health exam). The VA complied only sharing these portions with the members of the ACHREH on May 13th behind closed doors. Now it seems that closed sessions may become the norm. (Slam!)

The delay becomes unconsionable. Hundreds of thousands of Vietnam vets were undoubtably exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides in the service of their country and yet not one claim has been upheld to this date. As of June claims filed number 13,190 and over 87,000 Vietnam vets have been given general exams (such as they are) and placed on the VA's computerized Agent Orange registry. In fact, action on the claims cannot be expected to be forthcoming for several years or until the grand epidemiological study is completed. There must first be a pilot study of some 900 vets and that will take some time as well. The VA will either have to contract the study out or develop the in-house capability to conduct the study (the VA has no department of epidemiology).

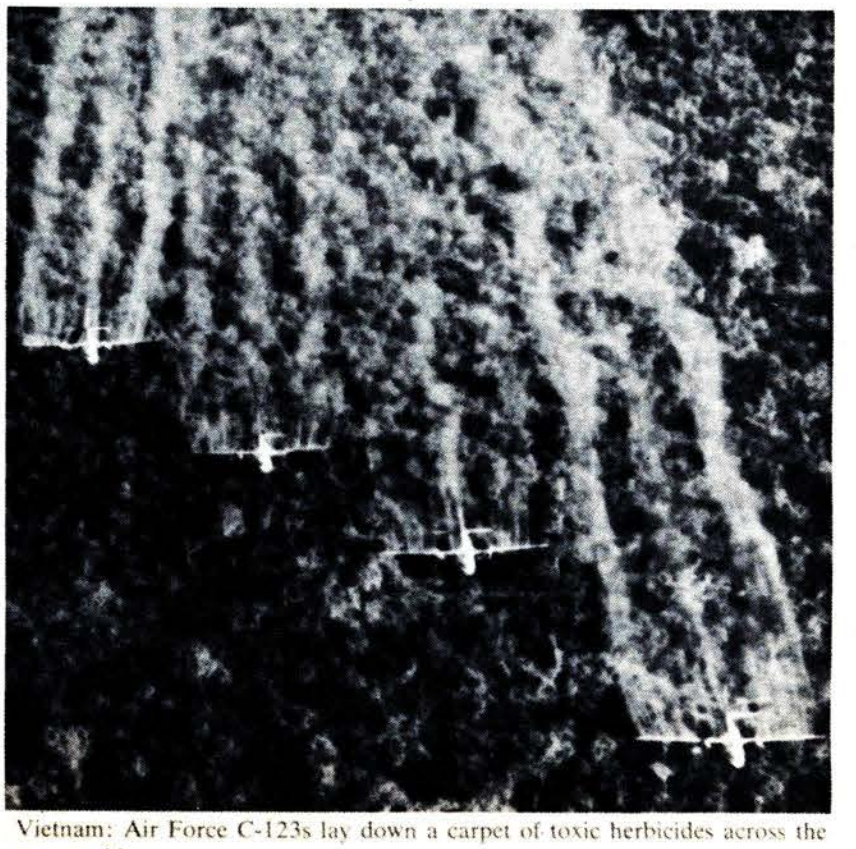
One base of the study will presumably be an "Exposure Index" which the VA has announced having been created by the Department of Defense and the Department of the Army. The criteria used for this index and its structure are, of course, confidential. Questions go begging. How, exactly, will this index be used? If it is to be used to determine a greater likelihood and degree of exposure it might serve as a useful but crude tool to add to other factors. But anyone who was in the Vietnam jungles knows that Agent Orange was sprayed and dumped in all kinds of places for which there are no records at all. Might this "exposure index" be used as a way to deny thousands of vets?

Then there's a mortality study which the VA feels is eminently suitable for its shining computers. The death rate and causes of death of Vietnam vets and non-Vietnam vets are to be compared. Causes will come from state death certificates. But dioxin poisoning is not easy to discern particularly when little is known about it even in major medical centers to say nothing about small towns around the country. If a vet shot himself because of problems associated with Agent Orange poisoning, he will not appear as an Agent Orange death on a state certificate. There is immense room for statistical error, particularly if this data is to be added to a questionable "exposure index."

Despite a growing number of studies there exists an uncomfortable sense in the proceedings of the ACHREH that the VA wishes the problem would just go away, and that the needs of human beings might be taking second place to finely crafted, numerous and lengthy studies. Time and again the VA has cried crocodile tears over the possibilities that accumulating data might be misleading. They worry that vets who report to the VA hospitals are "self-selected"--that is, a vet who goes to the VA for the Agent Orange exam does so because he thinks he has symptoms. It's a logic hard to argue with--most people who go to a restaurant are hungry. They worry that only 1/3 of the vets on their Agent Orange registry report current illnesses and the remainder are the "worried well." They worry that the Vietnam-era vets--the group that is being compared to the Vietnam vet--might have somehow "self-selected" service outside of Vietnam. They worry that Vietnam vets might be somehow a different breed of cat because they are "survivors" (if they had been killed they would presumably be statistically all right). They worry that Vietnam vets and Vietnam-era vets who were not in Vietnam might come from different socio-economic groups.

To be concerned about all these things in the name of scientific accuracy is one thing. But the VA seems much more concerned about heading off the growing anger of vets and their families. The message of VA head Nimmo to the ACHREH gives reason for pause. He did direct the Committee to continue "pursuing scientific inquiry" into the subject of health effects of Agent Orange and did point out

turn to page 7

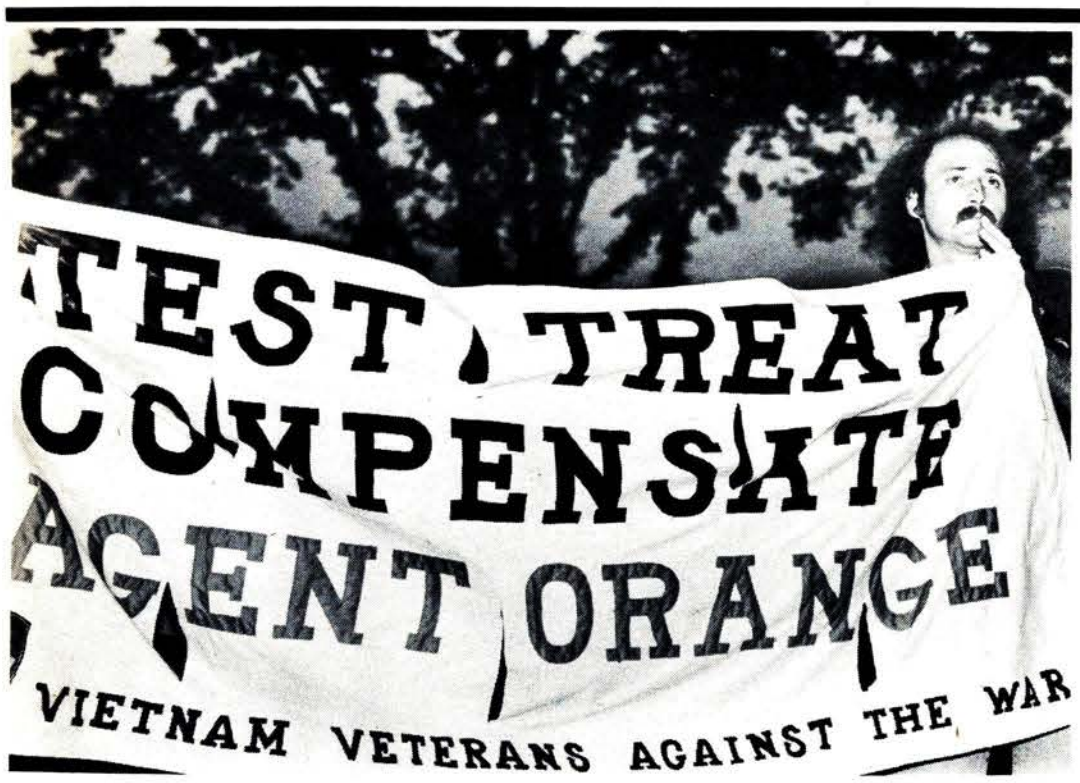


Vietnam: Air Force C-123s lay down a carpet of toxic herbicides across the countryside.

VVAW wants to offer a special welcome to new VVAW Chapters in:

San Diego, California
Dallas, Texas
New Jersey
Pittsburgh, PA
The Mid-Atlantic Chaper centered in Columbia, SC & Athens, GA.
Hollywood, Florida

FREE ESTIMATES
JEARL
Rainbow Interior & Exterior Decorating & Painting
Paint any room any color
Portrait & Mural painting on walls
HOURS — Daily 8 to 6 — Saturday 8 to 5
FOR QUALITY SERVICE, CALL 333-8158
JEARL L. WOOD • 15803 PAULINA AVE., • HARVEY, IL



CLASS ACTION SUIT ALIVE

AGENT ORANGE

Contrary to the belief coming from the media stories, the class action suit against chemical manufacturers of Agent Orange is alive and well. In February, 1982, Judge Pratt handed down all his pre-trial orders for the trial. He set the date--June, 1983. That's when vets get their chance to rake these corporate scumbags over the coals for what they've done in the name of profit. VVAW says make them pay, and pay big!

Every Vietnam veteran in this country is a member of the class in this action. Our biggest problem is notification of the class before the trial starts in June, 1983.

So, don't be discouraged. The suit against the corporations is still alive and well. Once the court decides that the chemical companies are responsible for poisoning us, then we must sue on state levels. That is where many of us will have our problems because of statute of limitation laws.

As veterans we can't just lay back and expect the lawyers and the courts to do justice in this case. We must fight the case too, and there's a lot you can do. For further information, contact the VVAW chapter nearest you.

AGENT ORANGE

SHORTS

Information which came to light during the class action suit against manufacturers of Agent Orange turned up a 1962 scientific paper giving a technique for testing the potential harm of dioxin. The study was financed by the Research and Development Division of the Army's Surgeon General. In another investigation a German scientific journal published dioxin toxicity information as early as 1957.

What this all adds up to is that both the companies that made it and the military that used it on veterans had a real fine idea of some of the dangers which could exist--but neither of them bothered to let us know!

Pentagon records show that Agent Orange was sprayed during the period October 1967 to July 1969 to remove vegetation from over 23 thousand acres along the demilitarized zone in Korea. According to the Defense Department, there were only US advisors to South Korean troops in the area at the time, and no US troops were known to be involved in the application of the herbicide.

According to a Dept of the Army publication Skin Diseases in Vietnam, 1965-1972, various skin problems "were never offically recorded because the men were not hospitalized for treatment. (p. 90)."

Continued from page 6

that the VA is new to the field of environmental medicine. But he also describes the issue of Agent Orange as an "emotional" one,and the tone of his message became even clearer when he directed the Committee to "set the record straight wherever and whenever you see any of the many exaggerations and distortions of this subject." He then gave the following instruction: "I believe our responsibility to relieve unfounded (emphasis is Nimmo's) anxiety among veterans and their families is at least equal to our responsibility to press on for whatever final answers there might be." A strange instruction indeed! Shouldn't this Committee merely press on for a final answer and let that determine whether there should be treatment and compensation or, alternatively, "relieved anxieties"? Apparently, not according to Nimmo whose primary concern seems to be simply, "Get the heat off!"

The May 13th meeting of the ACHREH was notable for one reason. VVAW and its allies were present, both inside and outside. Outside, over 150 pickets called for an end to VA cutbacks and for aggressive action on Agent Orange and post-traumatic stress disorders. Inside, 12 participants in Dewey Canyon IV attended the ACHREH meeting while 30 more were meeting with Chuck Hagel, the VA Deputy Administrator, since deposed.

It is unfortunate that this level of involvement cannot happen every time the ACHREH meets, but there is much that can be done. Fight VA cutbacks. Lobby in your own state for an Agent Orange outreach program and state medical support. Join the class action suit and file a claim with the VA or take their exam in order to be placed on their Agent Orange registry. Regarding our one window into the VA's activities around Agent Orange, the ACHREH, we should demand immediate public disclosure of protocols and study results, open meetings, and inclusion of state representatives and non-governmental epidemiologists. If you are in or near Washington, DC on the 31st of August when the next meeting will be held, go to it to show that Vietnam vets and their friends are not willing for the question of Agent Orange to be "solved" away from the public view.

It is up to us to open these windows.

Mike Sutton
Washington
VVAW

Agent Orange Pamphlets

25¢ Post Paid

16 pages of testimony by victims of Agent Orange and experts on the effects of the chemical on Vietnam Vets and thier families . 50¢ post paid.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

AGENT ORANGE DOSSIER

"AGENT ORANGE DOSSIER"-- 43 pages of information about Agent Orange including maps of areas sprayed and information on how an individual vet can work on his own case. $2 each;

Make checks payable to
VVAW
P.O.Box 25592
Chicago IL 60625

Vietnam Veterans Limited Incu

OPERATION DEWEY CANYO

Vets from Lima, Ohio selling apples to get to DC IV.

Preparations for Dewey Canyon IV began long before the opening of the camp on the Mall on the 12th of May. An advance team of VVAW people had already laid the groundwork by meeting and negotiating with the 16 police agencies, city government, the Department of the Interior and Capitol police as well as the VA, numbers of churches and support groups. As a result, kitchens were lined up, housing set, march routes approved and the logistics for a successful action set up before the first bus off-loaded at the Mall on Wednesday morning.

As vets arrived they volunteered to help set up tents, poster and leaflet around DC and set up the photo history display of the Vietnam War and the struggles of Vietnam veterans. By the time of the 5 o'clock follies to announce the "official"opening of Dewey Canyon IV, several hundred people from 28 states (including Alaska and Puerto Rico) had arrived and the stage was set for four days of activities on behalf of Vietnam vets.

On Wednesday evening we marched off to the White House although many of the marchers had never met let alone demonstrated together before. Cadence calls echoed off the federal buildings as we marched through the Washington streets. We held a rally across from the White House where mothers and wives of Agent Orange victims spoke out against a president who could spend more for his dinner setting than the VA will spend for Agent Orange research. Sukie Wachtendonk from Madison VVAW and Rena Kopystenski of Agent Orange Victims of New Jersey both spoke about the problems of Agent Orange victims and their families; Jim Wachtendonk, whose songs gave voice to the feelings of much of DC IV, sang about his child, affected by Agent Orange. He was followed by a silent picket line at the White House where pictures of children--American and Vietnamese--affected by Agent Orange were left for Reagan to remind him not only of what has happened in the past but what his policies can mean for the future.

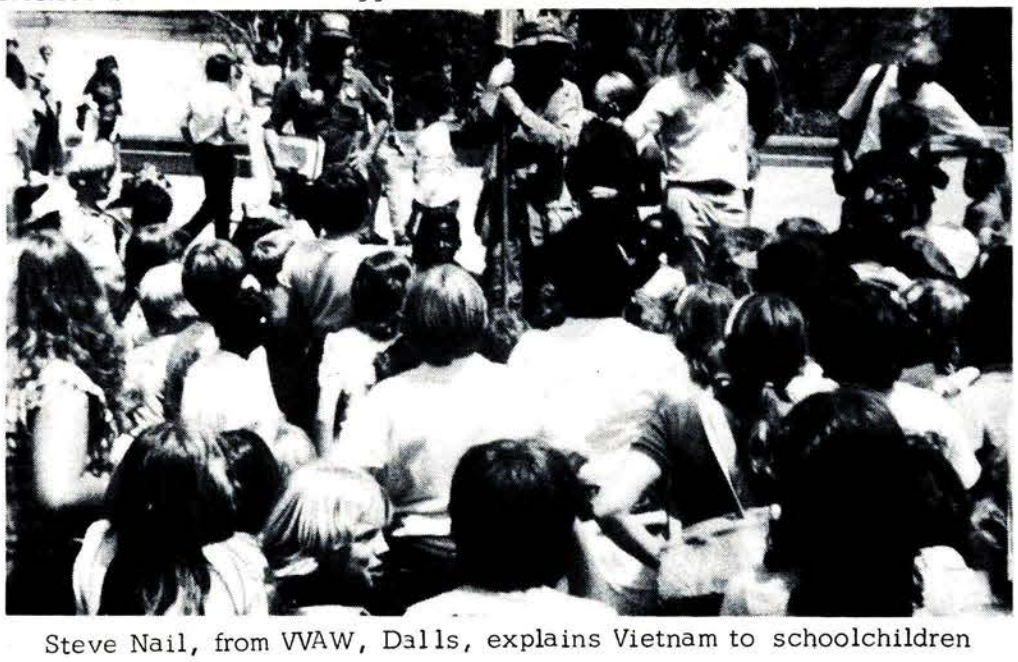
Thursday started with a memorial to Bonus marchers killed in 1932 where they were demanding decent benefits for World War I vets. Pete Zastrow of the VVAW National Office talked about the treatment of World War I vets compared to how Vietnam vets are being treated, and the similarities between their struggles and ours. Despite the rhetoric of honor for veterans, most vets, young and old have been screwed by the system that sent us off to fight.

The vets then marched to the VA Central Office where some held a picket line outside while a group of 30 vets went in to confront the Assistant VA Director and other assorted bureaucrats concerning the problems of Vietnam vets. Instead of generalities and glad-handing which the VA chiefs get from more traditional groups, these vets brought up concrete problems concerning hospital care, hiring practices and VA red tape; they also had concrete proposals around Agent Orange.

In the afternoon, vets rallied at the Capitol where speakers focused on what it meant for the U.S. to get involved in El Salvador and how we had seen the same scenario before. The vets then went off to lobby their Congresspeople, a process much aided by Mike Gold, Vice President of the National Association of Concerned Vets and by Congressman Kastenmeier of Wisconsin who allowed us to use his office as our communications center.

In the evening we held workshops covering Agent Orange, delayed stress, the draft, war and El Salvador, decent benefits and nuclear disarmament. There were positions put out around organizing and different approaches to achieve our goals. This was extremely successful in that it gave people from different groups and different parts of the country a chance to exchange ideas and experiences learning from each others' advances and problems.

Friday was reserved for David Stockman and his Office of Management and Budget, and Vietnam vets really gave it to him. During a picket line outside the OMB, people chanted:



Steve Nail, from VVAW, Dalls, explains Vietnam to schoolchildren on Capitol steps.

Davey Stockman dodged the draft,
Now he's giving us the shaft.
Give us 15 minutes alone,
We'll cut his budget to the bone.

Stockman didn't come up to see us and the guards wouldn't let us in to "see" him. Instead, speakers, including Alex DeLeon representing Latin vets and Leonard Huebner from Minneapolis/St Paul VVAW, spoke through loudspeakers, and even if Stockman didn't appear, we're sure he got the message.

In the afternoon there was more lobbying and by the time we were through we had been praised by aids and Congressmen as having carried off some of the most professional pigeon-holing they had seen.

Many vets could not get into seeing, let alone talking to these two-faced fellows who vote huge increases in "defense" funds while cutting vets' benefits. Others separated Congressmen from Congress "boys"--a number of Congresspeople supported a resolution to allow vets into Arlington while others refused even to meet with the vets in their offices (possibly afraid that Agent Orange is catching).

"Country Joe" MacDonald

At night there was a vets' concert headlined by Country Joe McDonald and including a number of vet singers and poets who shared, with an enthusiastic crowd, their ways of dealing with the experience of Vietnam.

Saturday was a first when VVAW was allowed into Arlington National Cemetery for a ceremony and speeches dedicated to those who died in Vietnam and in the years since Vietnam. The government had successfully kept VVAW out of Arlington since 1971 saying we were "political" (unlike groups like the American Legion who will consistently use the platform of Arlington to trumpet their brand of mindless patriotism). But in 1982 vets made it too hot for the guardians of Arlington to keep us out: an editorial in Newsday supported VVAW's right to hold our ceremony in Arlington; the editorial was read into the Congressional Record by Representative Kastenmeier of Wisconsin and followed by a house Resolution that VVAW be permitted into the cemetery; although VVAW had held the ceremony before there could be anything like a vote, there were 21 co-sponsors of the Re-

cursion into Congress 'Land'

ON IV: A TURNING POINT

Historic first as VVAW enters Arlington to hold ceremony.

solution, and other Senators and Representatives who called the Arlington brass to express their support for our right to be there.

The ceremony was short but respectful with a line of vets filing into Arlington, wearing our fatigues and highly conscious of the precedent being set when we marched through the Arlington gates. Vets listened to a speech by Ann Pine, a Gold Star Mother, and Barry Romo of VVAW, and many cried remembering friends and events that have never been put to rest.

Raising of international symbol to remember dead soldiers at Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

From Arlington the march moved along the lengthy route to the Capitol, stopping along the way at the site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial which is in the process of being built. Speakers from Black Vets for Social Justice, from the National Association of Concerned Veterans and Mary Gomez whose brother was a Marine killed in Vietnam, all hit at what a memorial to Vietnam veterans could be instead of sham that is being erected. Walter Klim of VVAW summed it up when he said, "Instead of a hole in the ground they should build a monument 10 stories high, and not just with the names of those killed in 'Nam, but those who died because of apathy and neglect since we returned." Brothers from Lima, Ohio, presented our version of a "memorial" when they put up a 10-foot high rifle, its barrel toward the ground with a helmet on the top, the traditional part of the military ceremony for those who have died.

At the Capitol steps, Bill Davis of VVAW closed the action with a rousing speech that fired up all those present. And finally, as it had been throughout the action, those who were participating in the demonstration played the major part as the microphone was open for statements from anyone who wanted to speak.

Reception by government workers, DC residents and tourists was inspiring. They supported us with waves, clenched fists, applause and even donations. If the government had received us as well, decent benefits and medical care would be a reality instead of a distant dream.

Dewey Canyon IV was more than a couple of marches combined with Congressional headhunting. It was an emotional and political demonstration that helped tie Vietnam vets from across the country into a single voice for four days. And more than just the four days in DC were the days following the action. New chapters of VVAW grew from Dewey Canyon IV, and old chapters were revived, and different vets groups saw how we can work together for a decent life.

DC IV HONOR ROLL

(The VVAW National Office owes a special vote of thanks to the following individuals, without whose dedicated efforts DC IV would have been less than it was.)

Mike Gaffney, Washington lawyer whose unceasing legal duel with the Arlington authorities was victorious when VVAW marched through the Arlington gates.

Representative Robert Kastenmeier of Wisconsin who introduced House Resolution 464 to allow VVAW into Arlington, his staff, the co-sponsors of the Resolution, and the many Senators and Representatives who helped along the way.

Marv Freedman of Madison VVAW whose individual efforts in the weeks and months before DCIV scared up much of the Congressional support.

Shaun and Susan Shaughnessy whose Washington home became a campground in the weeks before the demonstration and a vets' rest home during and after DC IV.

Annie Luginbill and Christy Vinter of Chicago who planned, organized and stocked the medical tent; Mike Klinkhammer of Racine who supervised it, and Dr Ron Sable and all the medics who, as in Vietnam, were there when we needed them.

Mary Murphy of Chicago who planned the menus and cooked the food, and all of the many kitchen-help volunteers.

Mike Gold of the National Association of Concerned Veterans who provided much of the expertise around lobbying Congress.

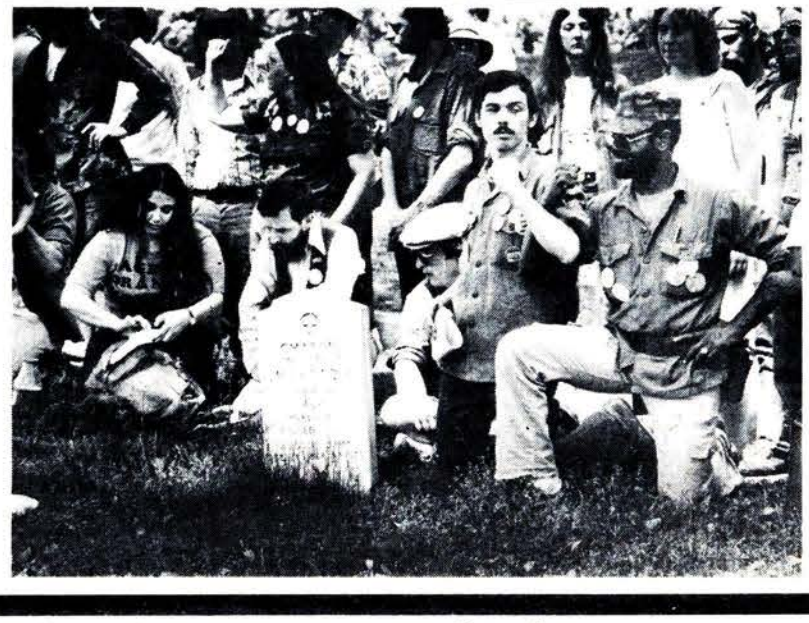
VVAW members and friends who went to Washington weeks in advance to make the final arrangements and create the framework on which DCIV was built.

All the people who came into Washington, saw what needed to be done, and went ahead and did it.

Finally, the vets, families and friends who came to DC IV and turned a demonstration into a community, in the best sense of the word. We expect to see you again--and we need you.

To all, our thanks. You made Dewey Canyon IV what it was.

The VVAW National Office



Nam Vets Lose
HAGEL RESIGNS

We of VVAW are hardly privy to the manuevering going on in the inner halls of the Veterans Administration--we can hardly get into the outer halls since we are veterans and, worst of all, Vietnam vets. But even without the inside information it seems to us that the resignation of Vietnam veteran Charles Hagel as the number 2 man in the VA is a giant step backward.

In many ways Washington is a long ways away, even for people who live there. Who really cares if Congressmen want to bugger their pages or Nancy Reagan wants to buy new dishes? Unfortunately, what happens in the bureaucratic infighting in the VA has a direct effect on our lives so, like it or not, we have to pay some attention.

What we do know is that during Dewey Canyon IV Hagel did set up a meeting with vets while others were picketting outside. It may have been a purely public relations gimmick--it probably was--but it was a hell of a lot further into the VA than VVAW has ever gotten in the past. And we've gotten the letter, signed by Hagel, sent to those who got the Agent Orange physical at the VA saying "We'd like to stay in touch with you. In the near future the VA will contact you for information to update our Agent Orange registry...," better than we've seen in the past.

In his public statements concerning his resignation, Hagel talked about his "differences of policy and direction with the VA administrator." We know some of the public positions of the VA administrator, Robert Nimmo--that the VA was "coddling Vietnam vets," that Agent Orange-produced chloracne was the same as "teenage skin blemishes." We also know that, in addition to being an ignorant boob, Nimmo is a millionaire buddy of Reagan who will slice the VA budget for vets and, at the same time, spend that money for his own new bathroom in his office. And that all his sins were "forgiven" by the Reagan Administration. To make a choice between Hagel and Nimmo seems to us easy: Hagel wins hands down!

But not according to Reagan and his staff of California simps, of whom Nimmo is one. If they weigh 2.7 million Vietnam vets in a scale with one Reagan campaign contributor, they seem to have no doubts either; so what if he's slightly crooked.

Up to now the VA has been pretty lucky in its choices of Vietnam vets: consistently the VA has found someone they can put forward as a Vietnam vet in a high position but who won't do a damn thing. It looks like they slipped up with Hagel--so he had to go. Once again, the often proclaimed commitment to help Vietnam vets is proved to be only some pretty words, and vets are still left to do what needs to be done on our own!

OPERATION DEWEY CANYON IV
LOBBYING

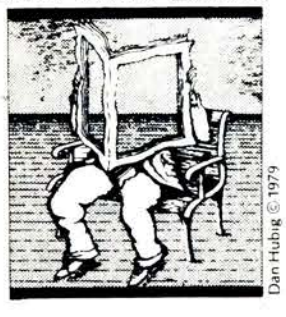
(The following article is taken from the NACV New Veteran News, the publication of the National Association of Concerned Veterans.)

NACV's Vice President Mike Gold directed the lobbying effort on Thursday and Friday, May 13th and 14th. He was prepared with voluminous amounts of information as vets broke into teams to visit their Congressional delegations and staffs. Thursday was targeted toward the House, while Friday was reserved for lobbying the Senate. Both days were deemed eminently successful. Each team was given room numbers, names, position papers and copies of the NACV New Veteran News and VVAW's THE VETERAN to pass on to the Congress. Hundreds of each were distributed, while vets who were utterly fed up with being ignored faced the representatives of the system nose-to-nose.

One of the highlights was a 15-person delegation that met with the staff of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on Friday. The debate, led by Gold, was spirited as vets let the Congressional staff know exactly how they felt. No rules of decorum held as the group brought up issue after issue concerning vets: employment, Agent Orange, nuclear exposure, education, programs for incarcerated vets, etc. People expressed how they felt in their own way. No one was rowdy or out of hand. By the end of the session, it was clear, however, that some were frustrated with how slowly the system works. "Well, they listened for three hous and heard what we had to say, but I don't know," said one vet, expressing his concern. Other vets, however, were "up." A team that visited with the Massachusetts State Delegation met with both Tip O'Neil (Speaker of the House) and Ted Kennedy. Both seemed responsive to the needs of vets and committed to providing some relief for the problems facing us.

While some Congressional Delegations were not in, their staffs were receptive to the delegations of vets and listened attentively. In several cases, follow-up letters from the Congressmen themselves have been received committing the Congressmen to support for upcoming legislation. As Gold put it, "No matter what we say, for these two days we've been saying it to the people who can do something about it, and that's what we're all about." That view was shared by many.

GOT THE BAD-NEWS BLUES?



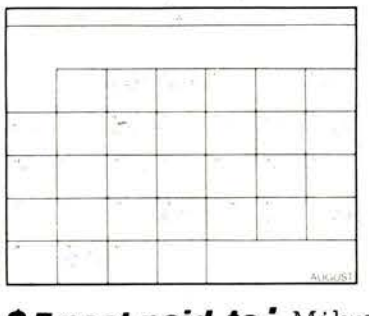
Are reports of bigger bombs, shrinking social services and Moral Majority crusades getting you down? Are even your favorite left-wing magazines mired in Reagan-esque gloom?

Well, there is an alternative! For 16 years, one magazine has followed the people who are **doing** something about war, poverty and injustice. Draft resisters, anti-nuclear protesters, feminists, conversion organizers, Indian activists, the Anti-Klan Network—these are just a few of the folks who appear on the pages of **WIN Magazine** every two weeks. Subscribe to **WIN** and get the good news about the growing nonviolent movement for social change.

Subscribe today and beat the bad-news blues! Send $20 for a year of **WIN**, or $11 for a 6-month taste, or $1 for a sample copy. Send your name and address with a check or money order to

WIN/ 326 Livingston St./ Brooklyn, NY 11217

VETERANS HISTORY CALENDAR



- **200 Entries from the Revolution to Vietnam**
- **1983 Calendar**
- **Makes A Great Gift**
- **Order Now**

$5 post paid to: Milwaukee VVAW
3433 N. Fratney
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Peoples College of Law

Founded by La Raza Law Students Association, Asian Law Collective, National Lawyers Guild and National Conference of Black Lawyers.

Now accepting enrollment applications for Fall '82 and Spring '83.

PCL's goals are to train peoples' lawyers and have a student body of ⅔ Third World/Working Class students with 50% women.

Its unaccredited four-year evening program leads to a J.D. and the California Bar Exam.

Admission based primarily on the demonstrated commitment to the struggle for social change. Two years of college or equivalent also required.

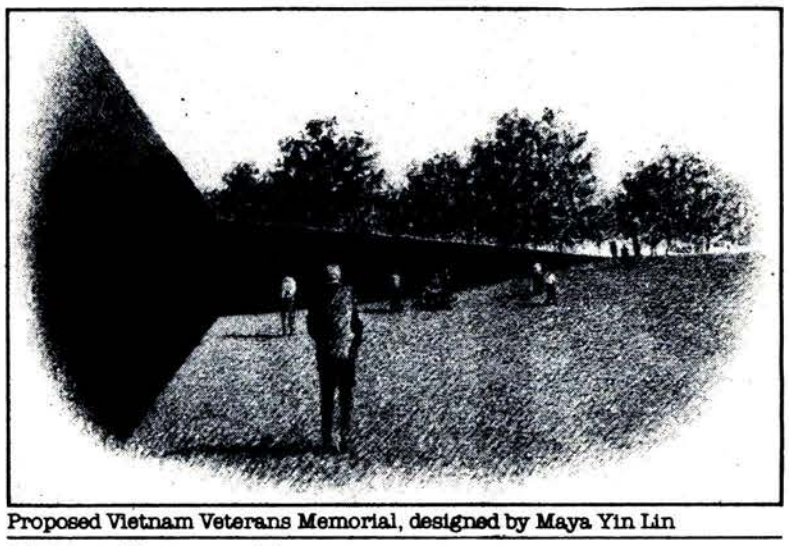
660 SOUTH BONNIE BRAE STREET
LOS ANGELES, CA 90057
213/483-0083

Looking For a 'Nam Friend

G.I. SEARCH

Looking for someone you served with in 'Nam? Agent Orange Victims of NJ (Box 233, Englishtown, NJ 07726) is acting as a clearinghouse for this information. Send them names, dates of service, unit and location in 'Nam and they'll try to match up people. ***Please Include a Donation to Cover Costs***

Vietnam Veterans Memorial



Proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial, designed by Maya Yin Lin

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington is back in the news again. Maya Ying Lin, the Yale architecture student who won the well-publicized contest to design the memorial, has challenged the additions to her design; they are "like adding a mustache to a work of art," she is reported as saying.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial began as an individual effort by Jan Scruggs, a Vietnam vet. His establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund brought in contributions from around the country, primarily from vets and the families of those who died in Vietnam. The contest for the design of the Memorial, funded at the beginning with $160,000 from H. Ross Perot, Texas multi-billionaire who also builds private armies to rescue POW's, was judged by a panel of artists and experts and ended up with a design: a black granite V-shaped wall with the names of the Vietnam dead inscribed on it.

Vietnam vets had no coming home parade, found they were often not welcome in traditional vets organizations, and got little or no help from the government with problems like post-traumatic stress disorders or Agent Orange poisoning.

When asked about the Memorial, most vets had no objection to the project, though many said they would prefer action on some of the many problems facing vets as a more realistic "memorial." Of course, that was not to be.

While there was considerable controversy over the design of Memorial when the contest had ended, the flap really got going once the government entered the picture.

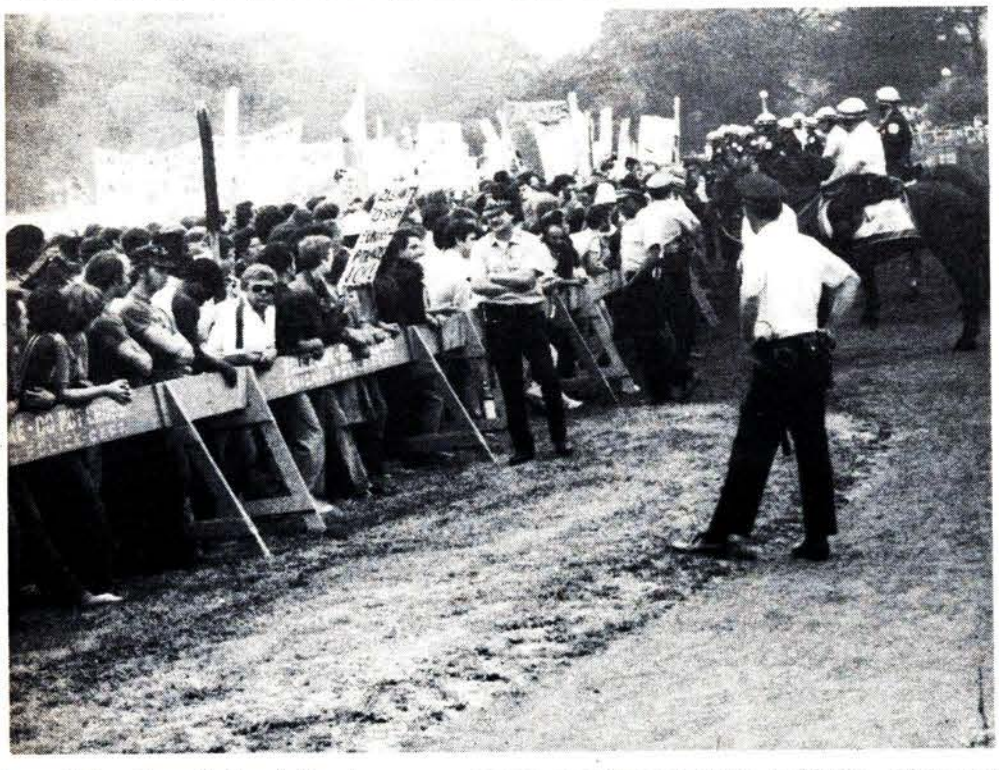
Though the money to build the Memorial came entirely through private donations, the government was asked to provide the land on which to build it. The resolution to set aside land between the Washington and Lincoln Monuments passed unanimously--even Congress can understand a good thing when they see it, and here was something that could be used to tell vets, "You've got a Memorial" even though you don't have anything else. And beside that, it was free, except for some land which wasn't being used anyhow.

Politics suddenly entered the picture, however. Conservative Senators, spurred on by Alabama's Jeremiah Denton took issue with the design since the "V" shape was reminiscent of the "V" flashed by peace demonstrators during the anti-war days. The Memorial, moreover, was not "heroic" (as if Vietnam was an heroic war). The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund quickly caved in to Congressional pressure; in the middle of the old design would be placed a heroic statue (the infantryman, remembered by all those who spent their time at Ft Benning, GA, with his arm raised to say "Follow Me") and a flag at the center of the "V."

But even a dunce like Denton could finally get it through his thick head that "Follow Me" into another Vietnam was not a message that the government wanted publicized (no matter how much they wanted to do it). Plans for the statue now call for three soldiers, one Black and two white, in tattered fatigues, without weapons (an M-16 was considered too "controversial").

Despite the complicated judging of the initial designs, the statue, done by Washington artist Frederick Hart (who finished in 3rd or 4th place in the initial judging) has scraped by with only the approval of Scruggs and a few Congressmen. And Maya Ying Lin, whose design went through a rigorous selection process is understandably upset.

RUN THE NAZIS OUT !



June 27 a handful of Nazis were given permission to rally in Chicago. There to oppose them were several thousand anti-Nazi demonstrators who restrained by hundreds of police and several barriers. Among those voicing their oppostion to Nazi garbage and effectively drowning them out was a contingent of Chicago VVAW members

Unity Thru Struggle
National Vietnam Veterans Network

A National Vietnam Vets Network was formed during Dewey Canyon IV. Uniting the member groups are two principles: Decent Benefits for all vets regardless of discharge, and No More Vietnams. The network will coordinate the activities of the member groups, provide a way to exchange information and publish an internal newsletter.

The network does not plan to have individuals as members since there are already plenty of good Vietnam vet groups; there is no reason to form another one. Only groups will be able to join; individuals who express an interest will be directed to one of the member groups in their area.

There are no "national directors," "national presidents," "founders for life" or any other such self-agrandizing nonsense. Groups involved have their own elected leaders and that's good enough.

The network will exchange experiences, drawing on both good and bad experiences around the country; we'll also exchange organizing skills and bring political pressure through coordination. While national demonstrations such as Dewey Canyon IV have a vital role to play in winning what vets need, we also have to have the ability to work in state capitals and with state legislatures.

VVAW will take the responsibility for centralizing information and getting out the newsletter. Some of the vets groups who initially joined are: Agent Orange Victims of New Jersey; VVAW, Veterans for Peace, Vietnam Veterans Awareness Works of Lima, Ohio; Vietnam Veterans of America of Fairbanks, Alaska; Veterans of the Vietnam War of Salt Lake City; and Vietnam Veterans and Family Outreach Group of La-Crosse, Wisconsin. For more information, write to the VVAW National Office, P.O.Box 25592 Chicago, IL 60625, or call Barry Romo at (312) 989-4684.

THE VETERAN welcomes letters, comments and criticisms. Please write. Also, send along any poetry, drawings, photos or stories you would like to see in the paper.

P O Box 25592
Chicago, IL 60625

FRAGGIN'

Sp5 Willy(Ret.)

HOW TO SURVIVE A NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST!

This seems to be a topic that is on the minds of great thinkers throughout the land today. They are sweating and straining to get their tiny brains to come up with some plan of survival.

Take T.K.Jones, Undersecretary of Defense. He suggested that you dig a hole, cover it with a few doors and throw three feet of dirt on top. What bothers me about this is that I can't figure out how to get in the hole after I've covered it with three feet of dirt, or if I'm already in the hole, how do I throw dirt on top of it. Maybe he means that some people get in the hole and others throw dirt on top of them--like the general gets in the hole and the private covers it up. (Maybe we could pretend that there's going to be a nuclear war, send all the generals down in the holes and bury them.)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has a plan also. Everyone get in your car and drive far away into the countryside. If this happens, the Guiness "Book of World Records"--last edition--will put it down as the world's greatest traffic jam.

Then we have Robert Kingbury, a former Army major and current head of the Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. He recognizes that these other plans are unworkable, so he wants to build an ark. On this ark would go certain people who have the skills that would be necessary to start up civilization again. Who these people are or what their skills would be is left unsaid. For starters, I would suggest someone like Thomas Crapper. He's the Englishman who invented the toilet a few centuries ago. Ah, well, I wish Los Angeles County success in building their ark. There should be side benefits also. Just in case a nuclear war doesn't happen, they'll be well prepared if it should rain for forty days and forty nights.

By far the most artful plan is just that--an art museum. That's what Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute is planning. He wants to build a giant dugout in Washington to hold art treasures and, of course, certain selected individuals. This museum would have all the modern convenience underground. There would be three feet of dirt and grass above it. (Three feet of dirt seems to be the magic formula for preventing nuclear death.)

This museum is supposed to cost about $75 million. They're trying to get half of it out of Congress from taxpayer dollars. The other half is supposed to come from donations. Interestingly enough, the donations are already coming in. The biggest contributors so far have been foreign embassies, corporations, and a CIA front group as well as individuals.

Evidently all of these are looking for a nice comfortable place to sit out a nuclear war. Just think; for a donation of fifty or a hundred thousand, you too can sit out the holocaust sipping bourbon from a well-stocked bar, viewing art treasures and enjoying the company of some of the most powerful figures around who made it all happen. That's better than floating off on some ark.

Actually, this is all pretty silly--all these ways of trying to deal with nuclear war. For anyone who's been in the service, the answer has already been taught to us. Just think back to the lessons we learned in Basic. When the bombs and missiles start flying, we should have about fifteen minutes warning time. Just go outside, breathe in the fresh air, spread your legs apart, bend as far forward as you can, grab your balls with your left hand, salute with the right, and kiss your ass goodbye.

SURVIVING AT THE V. A.

This is another matter. It takes some doing, but Robert Nimmo has been finding ways. The VA Administrator--in charge of watching government spending and being stingy to vets--has used some of that government money to good advantage.

He spent over $54,000 remodeling his headquarter's suite. The remodeling money went for such things as installing a shower in his 10th floor office, building new walls, installing satin beige carpeting, redoing the walls and buying a color TV, a judge's chair and a few other decorations. What happened to the old furniture? It was sent to the public affairs office of the Commerce Department. The director of that office? Why it's Mary Nimmo, Captain Nimmo's daughter.

The Better Government Association is the group which revealed all this extravagance. They also revealed how he paid out $8000 to his driver for driving him back and forth to work. Hell, Max Cleland, the previous administrator was a triple amputee and he drove himself to work. Nimmo did reimburse the VA for this money. Must have been embarrassed.

Nimmo did say that his long hours were one of the reasons for using the agency's transportation. Maybe if he didn't buy that color TV for the office his hours wouldn't have been so long. But it's hard to get away from them Soaps.

I suppose a few vets get a few less benefits in order to pay for the extras in Nimmo's offfice and still stay within the budget. What the hell. That's the way it's supposed to be. We're veterans. We're used to having it rough. After all, when you're part of the Reagan team, you go first class. You've got to survive. Hell, we'll even dig a hole for Nimmo and friends. Then we'll pile those three feet of dirt, and

GRENADE!

Speaking of first class, there's Representative James Collins of Texas. After the financial disclosure statements of members of the House of Representatives, Collins came out on top of the money heap with assets of between five and ten million. That's enough to buy a seat at the Smithsonian.

With all that money, he's not afraid to meet with little people. During the lobbying efforts of Dewey Canyon IV he even met with some vets. After listening to the rundown on Agent Orange, unemployment, the VA and all the other vets' problems (he generously had given the vets 10 minutes since, as he admitted, he knew nothing about the problems of Vietnam vets), he came up to one of the vets and said: "Are you on drugs?"

We trust that Mr Collins (who has big plans for himself and is now running for the Senate from Texas) will remain ignorant about the needs of Vietnam vets and is appropriately grateful that his career did not end on the spot. We certainly hope it will end soon.

GRENADE (2)!

In late April, Lee Dreyfus, Governor of Wisconsin wrote to President Reagan proposing that Vietnam vets be used to expand the National Guard and Reserves so the country could return to the concept of the "Citizen Soldier." In part he wrote, "Here is an opportunity for this nation to recognize and finally appreciate all of those men (apparently women don't count--ed.) who gave up a part of their lives fighting in Southeast Asia. Make no mistake, they will defend this nation if we are truly in peril. A rekindling of their self worth and our national pride in them is in itself a valuable goal."

During Dewey Canyon IV a contingent of Wisconsin vets met Dreyfus in the halls of the Capitol. As usual he didn't have time to discuss his letter with the vets but said he would meet with them back in Wisconsin. But his interest in "rekindling self-worth" hasn't yet extended to meeting with the vets. Nor has it extended to a promise to refund the Wisconsin state Agent Orange program.

Governor Dreyfus must also be sure that Vietnam vets are all on drugs if he thinks we're going to buy his plan to use us again or if he thinks we'll let him escape with sweet words and no action. In fact if he really understands how a lot of Vietnam vets feel about him and his stupid proposals, he might think twice (or even three or four times) about a re-arming of Vietnam vets.

Files Seized, Meetings Wired
VET CENTER AMBUSHED

On February 12, 1982, the Mobile Vet Center had an opening. Simultaneously, combined elements of federal (US Attorney's Office), VA Inspector General (DEA), state (Alabama Bureau of Investigation), and local government entered the Vet Center.

Sam Kaiser of the D.V.O.P. asked if any of the members of the combined operation task force had any form of warrant allowing their activity. There was no warrant obtained for 3 to 5 hours. Client files were removed and later inspected for months. Records from Alabama Veterans Services state that corporate offices were removed and the office was sealed.

Approximately one hour after the Mobile opening ceremonies were completed, a phone call was placed to Tom Ashby and Don Reed, who, after hearing what was happening from their staff, requested to speak to Mr Joe McClean, U.S. Attorney's Office. He read the two vets their rights and informed them that they and their entire operation were under investigation for trafficking in controlled substances and falsification of government records. He also stated that since they had reason to believe that the vets would destroy said records, he was confiscating them. He stated that Dr David Curry, Mobile team leader, was involved. Within 48 hours, seven of the eight Vet Center team members had been involuntarily placed on administrative leave. As a result of the questioning by various investigators with dozens of people connected with the Alabama Veterans Services (AVS) and the Vet Center programs, suspension notices began appearing for certain employees. Some suspension notices were accompanied by a statement from Mr Grady Gibson, Alabama Bureau of Investigation (ABI) alleging that on November 11th, 1981, Veterans Day, he had seen various members of AVS, the Vet Centers and others smoke some marijuana.

A recap of the AVS/Vet Center activities on Vets Day reveals that both staffs worked diligently preparing for a long news conference late in the morning with Alabama Governor Fob James who declared that day to be Vietnam Veterans Day. An open house was held in the afternoon and phone banks were manned in conjunction with the Red Cross that night to answer statewide response to the televised showing of "Frank: A Vietnam Veteran."

The currently suspended Vet Center staff and numerous AVS members all worked fourteen to sixteen hours that day without pay. Many Vietnam vets were contacted and helped that day, to include over 150 phone calls that night.

Further information revealed that for over two years agent provocateurs had clandestinely and systematically been sent into the Vet Center posing as veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders. These people were wired for sound recording on at least some occasions.

Our analysis of the situation is that the spirit and intent of Public Law 96-22 (which set up the Vets Centers) has been clearly violated. Vietnam vets, nationally, have no guarantee that their groups meetings are not being taped by government agents and that their confidential Vet Center and association community based organizational files will not be confiscated and inspected. This coordinated attack threatens not only the two Vet Centers in Alabama and the regional office in Atlanta, but all Vet Centers and their clients everywhere.

Now that the Vietnam veterans' leadership has been removed, the bureaucrats have moved into the Alabama Vets Centers and have destroyed the positive image we were building for Vietnam veterans. They have closed the Alabama Veterans Services state office, dismantled our employment program and taken VVA, NACV, and VVAW files. Their approach to operating our program is poor. For instance, the "Fee for Services" monies, for which we have all fought, will soon be squandered through poor design. Their recruitment and training approach are out of phase with the past successful models. Having physically dismantled the Birmingham Vet Center and AVS and publically attacked them, the VA and the investigative arms of the executive branch of our government have insured that Alabama Vietnam-era veterans have gotten their message: you shall gather together neither for therapy nor as an organization.

We in Alabama have provided the nucleus and leadership for the Southeastern protion of the Vietnam veterans movement for a decade. For the last two years we have been "investigated" by various agencies of various levels of our government. There may have been "improprieties" by connected individuals. This would not surprise us--our truth and our survival have stemmed from the fact that our consciousness has necessarily preceded social understanding and change. We certainly have not survived the system by imitating it.

Regardless of any individual charges that may come from this, we and our program are what we are purported to be. We may not have been the government's favorite program and/or employees but we were damned successful with those we served.

Our reputations for helping Vietnam veterans all preceded this program. Now, simultaneously as a group and as individuals, we are under assault as is the order of our business for all of these years.

The stress levels of many here in Alabama has been high for weeks now, but the Vet Center directorship has refused to respond to our needs either as employees or Vietnam veterans. The mental/emotional stress of surviving such an ambush is demanding and depleting. Many have become casualties to this attack. Two team leaders, Don Reed and Dr David Curry, and two counselors, Tom Ashby and John Matthews are apparently the primary targets. Of these wounded, John Matthews is critical. John has proven to be an excellent counselor, and like many Vietnam-era veterans has had related problems. John was hit immediately, fainting when his proposed suspension notice was served on him. He required three weeks of inpatient psychiatric care and is currently under medication. During the process of John's emotional destruction, the VA took the opportunity to shoot a wounded man--they fired him for not cooperating.

We are pinned down and in immediate need of support.

Sincerely,

The Alabama Four

Don Reed
Tom Ashby
David Curry
John Matthews

for vietnam era veterans help without hassles

- free, direct services
- Vietnam-oriented
- professional staff
- extensive resources
- nationwide locations

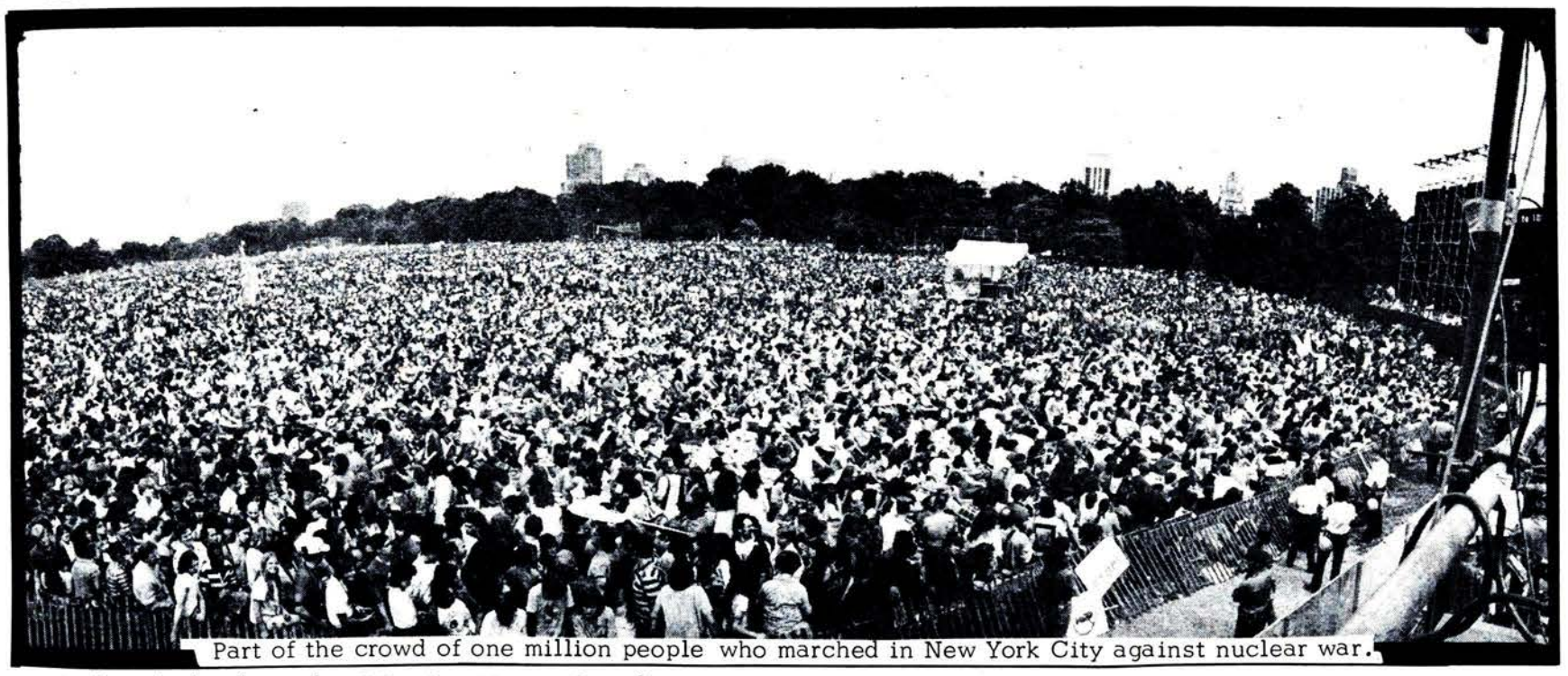
We know the problems Vietnam era veterans face, and we're here to help you get the help you need . . . without the hassles.

Stop by or call

Vet Center

Consult phone directory in your area.

NUCLEAR INSANITY



Part of the crowd of one million people who marched in New York City against nuclear war.

How is it that the leaders of the worlds two great super-powers can consistently declare themselves dedicated to peace and, at the same time, threaten to unleash a nuclear war and spend incredible amounts of money to create and build newer and more deadly nuclear weapons. No one would object should St Ronnie and St Leonid get together in a ring somewhere and duke it out; they could even use conventional weapons. And nuclear handgrenades--some suitable location could be found. And they could take along their respective Congresses if they wished. Unfortunately, that is not what these men with their fingers on the nuclear triggers have in mind. Instead, they will kill off all of us and probably the planet as well.

The following article, written by a member of Chicago VVAW, discusses the reasons behind some of the nuclear insanity and proposes some steps that the U.S. could take to start to slow down this madness which could kill us all.

It is no accident that a million people rallied in New York on June 14th for nuclear disarmament, or that 3 million hit the streets in the same cause in Europe last fall. These demonstrations reflect public concern over the increasingly tense international situation and especially with irresponsible, in fact insane talk by high government officials (Reagan and Bush included) about a "winnable" nuclear war. The talk is accompanied by their wish for new nuclear weapons systems, many with a "first-strike" capability. What's going on here?

The U.S. was the first country to develop and the only country to use nuclear weapons. In the waning days of World War II with the Japanese fleet destroyed, American bombers hitting Japanese cities at will, and the Japanese trying to open surrender negotiations, the U.S. destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki with 800,000 civilians killed. But the U.S. enjoyed its nuclear exclusivity only briefly. Against the advice of J. Robert Oppenheimer (creator of the A-Bomb) the U.S. developed the H-bomb--and the USSR exploded one later in the same year. Each country now had a justification for increasingly huge expenditures to develop new weapons: each had to catch up or stay ahead in the nuclear race. The U.S. developed intercontinental strategic bombers in the mid-'50's; the USSR in the late '50's. The U.S. developed nuclear subs in the mid '50's; the USSR in the late '50's. The U.S. developed nuclear-powered aircraft carriers in the early '60's; the USSR still has none. The U.S. developed MIRV in the late '60's, the USSR in the mid-'70's. And on and on.

In the U.S. the nuclear race has been a popular political scare tactic: out-of-office politicians always seem to manage to find a U.S. weakness. In the fifties there was a "bomber gap" which was discovered to be a hoax after more bombers had been built. John Kennedy used a "missile gap" to help get elected in 1960, but this too was found to be a fraud after more missiles were built. And Reagan used the same tactic to help defeat Carter in the most recent presidential election--it seems to be good politics as well as good business for the defense plants.

In many ways the USSR is a relatively backward country which has been playing nuclear catch-up throughout the nuclear age. The present situation is, according to departing Secretary of State Haig, one of "rough parity" in strategic nuclear weapons. So why the demand for more and more nukes?

There are several forces at work. The nuclear weapons industry wants orders, of course. The Pentagon wants a huge budget, and the administration wants to hold on to the U.S. crumbling authority around the world. What the Administration seems to be doing is using a kind of nuclear blackmail on the American people: unless you finance an enormous increase in conventional forces, we may be forced to use nuclear weapons. And the nuclear threat can be used to terrify the Europeans, the Japanese and the Russians into "behaving." If these countries are convinced that the U.S. is sufficiently insane to use nuclear weapons if provoked, then they won't provoke us. And then there seem to be elements of the Administration who believe that the Book of the Apocalypse is the revealed word of God and that the end is near which makes it a duty to take the godless communists along with all the rest of us into nuclear hell.

The consequences of nuclear war can't be fully evaluated. The destruction of the earth's ozone layer, the presence of enormous levels of radioactive contamination, atmospheric dust interfering with sunlight, massive numbers of deaths and physical destruction--and these are only a few of the possibilities.

And then the nuke warriors of the Reagan Administration seem never to understand the political questions. If merely the threat of nuclear war brings out millions into the streets, what would the first use of a tactical nuclear weapon do? Reagan's nuclear saber-rattling has already accomplished the remarkable task of making the not-too-pacifist Brezhnev look relatively "good" in the eyes of the world's people by saying that destruction of the earth would be "irresponsible." The U.S. would not even echo the Soviet pledge (for whatever that's worth) not to be the first to use nuclear weapons! In contrast, the Chinese government has offered to dismantle all of its nuclear weapons if the U.S. and the USSR will dismantle half of theirs.

And there is one more kicker in the whole mess. During the next decade many more countries will join the nuclear "club." And there is no particular need for fancy and expensive delivery systems, either; it would hardly be difficult to disassemble a weapon, smuggle it into another country, put it back together and blow it off. For ex-

turn to page 15

VVAW Joins March
ONE MILLION HIT NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

The VVAW anti-nuke contingent.

Over one million people marched in the streets of New York City on June 12th to protest against the nuclear arms race, making it the largest political demonstration in the history of this country. The demands of the demonstration were: Zero Nuclear Weapons, ban the neutron bomb; Stop the Arms Race, abolish nuclear weapons now; No Military Intervention, U.S. out of El Salvador; Meet Human Needs, feed the people not the war machine.

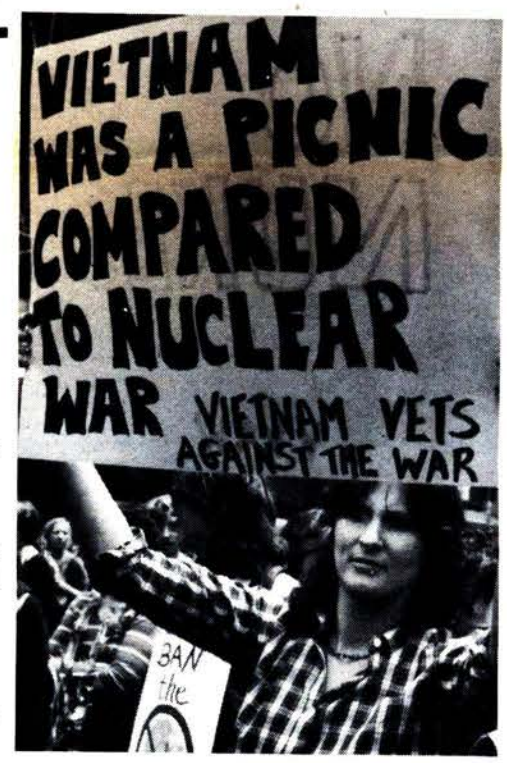
The main march started from in front of the United Nations and was joined by feeder marches from other parts of the city along the route to the Great Lawn in Central Park. There, the crowd listened to political speeches and were entertained by the likes of James Taylor, Joan Baez, Jackson Brown, Linda Ronstadt, and Bruce Springsteen.

A VVAW contingent of about 40 people participated in the demonstration. The group was made up mostly of people from the re-emerging New York City chapter of VVAW who were joined by veterans and supporters from Ohio, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Delaware. Numerous vets jumped out of the crowd along the way, and joined the VVAW group. Some of them said, "Hey, I was in VVAW ten years ago, I didn't know you guys were still around." Others said they had never been in a political demonstration before in their lives.

The response to the VVAW contingent was fantastic. Bystanders along the route of the march continually broke into spontaneous applause as the VVAW banner went by. A woman yelled over the loudspeaker from one of the secondary stages along the route, "Here comes VVAW. Welcome back!"

Everyone who participated agreed the event was an extraordinary experience. Despite the huge numbers--the march started at eleven in the morning and people were still filing past the UN at 4:30 in the afternoon--the people in the crowd were orderly, friendly, respectful of one another and most importantly, serious about their commitment to end the nuclear arms race. This spirit of common courtesy and political concern created a bond of unity among the people there that had more potential energy than anything released by splitting atoms. We were all glad to be there.

Pete Mahoney
New York VVAW



VETS NAVAL BLOCKADE
OPERATION ORANGE WAVE

The boats were ready. Life preservers, signs, raingear and food for the troops were loaded, and our twin orange shark fins trailed behind us. But where was Admiral Thornton? No doubt sweeping for mines offshore of the governor's mansion in Madison in preparation for the Madison VVAW chapter's first annual naval blockade, "Operation Orange Wave." Assisting in the operation were boats, canoes, rubber rafts, and trailing always closer, those ominous orange shark fins!

VVAW members from Chicago, Appleton and Milwaukee participated along with us at the Madison Vets' House Memorial run. Now I didn't say that any of us ran, but we did attend the Memorial Service afterwards. With the planting of our fourth tree at Warner Park we knew it wouldn't be exposed to 2,4-D like the first two were; our ban on its use in the city would protect the new tree well.

Now it was time to bring those memories we all shared of buddies here and gone to VVAW Madison Chapter's naval blockade. It was planned for Governor Lee Dreyfus. In a letter to President Reagan he suggests the redrafting of Vietnam vets. "It will give you, Mr President, the opportunity to restore the pride and belief of those same men in themselves and their country." Lee likes the idea of vets being already combat trained, and sees gold in our early availability for combat. Never happen, Lee! But the Madison Chapter stands ready to be the first Wisconsin vets to receive arms and ammo. About Face!

While the picket line walked by the Governor's gate, our armada entered the blockade area. Being scanned by the camera atop the Mansion wasn't our only coverage. Admiral Thornton shuttled press to and from the blockade; our event was in contrast to every other traditional event in Madison.

Operation Orange Wave finished as enthusiastically as it began. We were more than the number on our picket line and the naval blockade. Our fallen brothers and sisters accompanied us from beginning to end.

Continued from page 14

tra thrills, a terrorist could rebuild his bomb and stick it in one of the U.S.'s poorly guarded nuclear power plants and then threaten to set it off. The prospect of this sort of thing, and of nuclear weapons in the hands of the Argentines, the Pakistanis, or the Iranians or Libyans is such that even the likes of ex-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara is freaked out and calling for a nuclear freeze.

What's to be done? Clearly neither the U.S. nor the USSR is about to give up its political aims: the U.S. will continue to meddle in Central America and there's no word about Soviet troops leaving Afghanistan. But there are immediate steps which can be taken: first, an immediate freeze of all nuclear weapons testing, production and emplacement. An immediate no-first-use pledge by all the nuclear powers. The setting up of nuclear-free zones, starting with Europe, and the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from such zones. And finally, the dismantling of nuclear weapons by all powers. The realities of nuclear weaponry are such that the U.S. could safely disarm unilaterally, if necessary, down to a couple of missile subs (the Ohio trident sub has 24 missiles with sufficient warheads to strike 192 targets!). Partial unilateral disarmament would show that the U.S. is serious about human survival and would put enormous domestic and international pressure on the USSR and other powers to follow suit. Otherwise, the already mammoth worldwide peace movement will look like a mere ripple in a pond.

RECOLLECTIONS

VVAW invites contributions to "Recollections"--stories or poems describing the military or Vietnam.

Between Two Fires

'RESUSCITATION OF THE DEAD EARTH'

(The following story, "Resuscitation of the Dead Earth" by Chu Thao comes from a collection of stories called Between Two Fires. Originally the winning stories in a newspaper contest, they were censored both by the Theiu government in Saigon and by the Viet Cong because the stories represent those who wanted simply that the war should end so they could return to a "normal" and peaceful life.)

"You see? What luck!"

The crippled farmer put down his crutches and sat to observe better. On the surface of the humid soil he saw the traces of earthworms.

He uttered a low cry: "They are alive! Alive! This earth is not to be abandoned."

It turned out that the source of hope of the inhabitants of Binh Hoa village was none other than earthworms.

"Friends, relatives, the earthworms can survive!"

The inhavitants of the small village greet the news with great joy. But how did it come about that they paid such great attention to these earthworms that they considered them important to their own survival? The war had made it so.

After the atom bomb had exploded at Hiroshima, people there believed that the earth was dead under the effect of the terrible weapon--until seven years later, when a pea plant was able to grow. The Japanese farmers had stood silently to watch this small plant, and they were so moved they shed tears.

The state of mind of the Japanese then was the same as that of these Vietnamese farmers of Binh Hoa village as they stood looking at the earthworms survivng from the dead earth.

Binh Hoa was a small village beside Highway 1. It had become well known for its prosperity. A few years after the resistance against the French ended, its inhabitants became prosperous. All the houses in the village had red tiled roofs, and at night they were lighted by gas-mantle lamps. Binh Hoa displayed its prosperity to the tourists who passed on Highway 1. All this prosperity had come from the earth. And the earth there was well known for its fertility.

But the war had come and Binh Hoa had met the same fate as untold numbers of other Vietnamese villages.

One day, the American soldiers opened an operation in the village. A Viet Cong soldier had fired a B-40 rocket, destroying an American armored car. It took the American GI's only a few seconds to react. The inhabitants of Binh Hoa village had the opportunity to observe at first hand the strength of a Great Power.

A rain of bombs and rockets fell from the sky and transformed the village into a sea of fire. There was no joking about the scorched-earth strategy.

This was not the end, however. American strategists probably reasoned that the VC are only good at hiding themselves in the thick bushes in order to lay ambushes; thus, if the Americans could destroy the bushes, they could destroy the VC.

They did destroy the bushes. Tree leaves began to wither. The first victims were the vegatables. Then the papayas, mangos, jackfruit, and others met the same fate. Finally came the turn of the water palms. This kind of tree can survive any natural catastrophe and can grow in sweet water or salt water, but now it withered miserably. The science of death had made great progress.

The inhabitants of Binh Hoa had been evacuated during the fighting and had gone back after the fire storm was over. They looked with pain at the results of the sweat and tears of a lifetime reduced to ashes.

But they were more terrified when they realized that they were standing on a dead earth.

Along the two sides of a railroad track and the highway, not a blade of grass survived. The surface of the ground was flat, like the forehead of a bald man. Here and there, the trunks of toppled coconut trees protruded along the edges of ditches, leafless bamboo stems stood pointing up at the sky. Dull yellow and ash gray covered the scene and stretched like a mourning shawl toward the horizon.

There were no barking dogs, no birds' songs, not even the familiar chirping of insects. The soil was dead.

The farmers of Binh Hoa silently started to rebuild their lives. But when they cultivated their lands again, their terror rose to a peak. Not a single species of plant would grow in the soil. Corn seeds would not come up. Pumpkin leaves withered. Even coconut shoots could not develop.

The authorities showed somehow that they paid attention to the welfare of the inhabitants. They imported "miracle rice" seeds from Taiwan, soybean seeds from the Philippines. But they were of no use to the people of Binh Hoa, because their soil was dead.

A number of people lost faith. They gave up farming entirely and went to make a living washing clothes for the Americans. But the majority still clung patiently to the soil, hoping it would revive one day.

The old farmers had concluded that cultivation could resume if earthworms could live. So, they began raising the worms that became their hope. They journeyed to Tan Thanh village, several dozen kilometers away, to dig for worms and bring them back to Binh Hoa.

Their first attempt had ended in failure: all the earthworms had died. On the second try, the same thing happened. This was the tird try at "importing" earthworms.

"Friends and relatives, the earthworms can live! They can really live! The earth is resuscitated!"

The old crippled farmer Tu Lau went around on his crutches to spread the good news to the villagers.

Arriving at a place once called Kapok hamlet--all that remained now was a group of charred foundations--Tu Lau saw a very old man busying himself with digging. The man's white hair contrasted sharply with his gray skin.

"Uncle Bay, the earthworms can live."

The old man stopped working. His face beamed a happy smile upon hearing the news, like our faces when we feel a gentle breeze during a summer noon.

"What are you planting, Uncle Bay?" Tu Lau asked.

"I'm growing tranh grass."

"Dear me, why are you growing that?"

The old man explained: "This soil still contains poison. The other day, we failed in our attempt to grow coconut trees. Now I am planting this kind of grass so that it will absorb the poison. Then I will plow it under and grow other plants."

The old man continued: "We can also use this for our thatched roofs. The water palm trees have all died."

The man then returned to his work. After each hoe stroke he paused and breathed heavily. Reconstruction was not as easy as destruction....